

Life Changes

If there's one thing we cannot avoid, it's change. Much of the time change comes in the form of minor adjustments or temporary inconveniences encountered in our day-to-day lives. Other times, however, the changes we experience can be quite disruptive or even life-altering. While the transition to a new reality can be complicated, confusing, and perhaps frightening, there are ways to ease the shift from one way of life to another. Keep reading to discover how you can manage the transitions in your life and come to appreciate the good that can come from the losses you feel.

Acknowledge change

The first step in managing transition is understanding what change looks like. Major life changes come in many forms – some are more noticeable or recognizable, while others are more obscure. In addition, what one person considers to be a major change may vastly differ from that of someone else. As such, here are some examples of changes that can have a profound effect on our lives:

- Death of a loved one or pet
- Marriage
- Divorce
- Birth/adoption of a child
- Serious illness or critical injury
- Major change in income
- Career change (promotion, demotion, job loss)
- Retirement
- Natural or manmade disaster
- Moving/relocation

Acknowledge loss

Next, understand that change goes hand-in-hand with loss. The idea of loss is inherent when a change is tangible, such as with death, divorce, or layoff, yet it isn't something that we often associate with good or deliberate changes, like getting married, being promoted, or living a healthier lifestyle. Regardless of how you might categorize the changes in your life – positive, negative, needed, unwelcome, planned, or unexpected – each is accompanied by some form of loss, and it's important to acknowledge this. For example:

- By entering a committed relationship, you may feel the loss of your singledom, certain elements of privacy, and some level of independence, autonomy, and individual identity
- Becoming severely injured or ill may mean you may lose the ability to do certain activities, your independence, and even your dignity at times
- With the birth of a child comes the loss of spontaneity, freedom of responsibility, and even some friends
- Moving can mean you lose touch with friends, experience a change in social/professional status, or feel as though you don't belong
- In general, change can trigger the loss of your former self, routines, and efficiency, and can alter your desires and goals

Allow yourself to accept and appreciate

But all is not lost! Once you're aware of the losses you experience as a result of a change, be mindful of the effects they can have on you. By giving yourself permission to mourn the better you'll be at finding time to reflect on and appreciate some of the positive things that change can bring, such as:

- A newfound appreciation for life
- Strengthened relationships and connection to others
- Personal growth and maturity
- New beginnings/adventures
- Better self-care
- A desire to make the most of each day
- The opportunity to challenge yourself
- Increased responsibility
- Increased resilience and ability to cope with life's curveballs
- Awareness of what's truly important to you

Adapt to your new normal

Perhaps the most important takeaway here is that loss changes us forever (whether we realize it or not) because life changes are just that – change. You'll never be exactly who you were before the change – and that's okay. If you suddenly realize that your usual punctual self is now perpetually late, or that you *used* to be

organized but just aren't able to get it together at the moment, that's okay, too! Eventually you'll begin to adapt, accept, and appreciate the new version of yourself, and so will others.

For more information and resources on how to cope with change and loss or to schedule an appointment with a licensed counselor, call the EAP today.

The EAP is a voluntary and confidential employee benefit available to federal employees and their family members at no cost.

24 HOURS A DAY

800-222-0364

TTY: 888-262-7848

foh4you.com